Good Practice

International Center for Tropical Agriculture - CIAT

1. Partnership with Students
2. Social Welfare Fund
3. Occupational Health and Security Management
4. Use of Internet in Recruiment Process

CIAT

CIMMYT

IPGRI

IWMI International Water Management Institute

WorldFish

CGIAR

Introduction to the Good Practice Showcase

"If only we knew what we already know" is a dilemma that haunts knowledge-based organizations. The CGIAR is no exception.

Every organization does certain things exceptionally well. But most organizations do not actively capture those experiences or make them available to others. As a result, valuable knowledge is lost.

The CGIAR system is actively renewing itself. In the complex network of autonomous centers that characterizes the system, sharing good practices will help to save money, speed progress, avoid costly errors, foster teamwork, and enhance the quality of our products and services. All of this will strengthen our brand in the world and reinforce the faith of stakeholders in the ability of the system to evolve and meet future needs.

The Strategic Advisory Service for Human Resources—a service established by CIAT, CIMMYT, IPGRI, IWMI, WorldFish, and the CGIAR System Office—is pleased to presente this series showcasing good Human Resource Management practices. The practices described come from staff members who chose ingenious options—often counter-intuitive to the thinking at the time—and managers who implemented them with imagination and effectiveness. By expanding the realm of the possible in the discipline, they also add to our body of professional knowledge.

For more information about the practice described in this publication, please contact the CGIAR Center implemented the practice. For more information on other titles in this series, please contact the SAS-HR at email:sashr@cgiar.org

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CIAT

CIAT*: Partnership with Students

Accepting Undergraduate Students for Thesis Work or Work Experience

1. What Motivated the New Practice?

Our institution has been carrying out this practice since 1970, as a training activity led by senior scientists for young scientists. At first, the idea was to publish and disseminate the Center's research results, transfer technology, and establish an information center and library that would provide reports and data on tropical agriculture for the use of scientists throughout the world.

Initially, thesis students came from the Universidad Nacional de Colombia. Only a maximum of 30 students per year were accepted, according to their academic and personal qualities. They were distributed among the Programs, with their thesis work taking as long as 12 months. During these months students received scientific direction and financial support to do their job.

Currently CIAT works with students from different Universities in the areas of research, Support and Administration following the same guidelines established since seventies. Today the recruitment of students is oriented to facilitate young scientists development, and promote interinstitutional cooperation between itself and the universities. Thus, advantage is taken of opportunities to incorporate new ideas and new approaches into each task of CIAT's processes. According to CIAT's Communication Unit Associate, *"Students are given the freedom to propose and create within the framework of institutional requirements. This encourage students to assume considerable responsibility for their practice and also enables them to grow as people".*

2. What was Done?

From 1982, we have accepted 605 students (296 women, 309 men) who have either conducted thesis work or work experience at CIAT as part of their academic requirements.

For example, in 2004, we accepted 31 women and 30 men students from universities of 5 Colombian cities. The students come from disciplines such us Business Administration, Agronomy, Biology, Information Systems and Social Communications–Journalism. They are distributed among different CIAT Projects and Units as follows: Research = 52, Administration = 3, Support = 6.

We drew up cooperative agreements with universities, defining the characteristics of each agreement with the participation of the student, the

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CIAT scientist directing the work, and a co-director from the student's university. The norms by which students join CIAT are defined according to Colombian Law and established CIAT policy.

3. What was Achieved and Learned?

A significant percentage of students have won awards, were given honors or laureates by their respective universities for their theses. Many have had their work presented at congresses, and at scientific and academic events, both national and international. This facilitates the purpose of disseminate the research and position the Center image.

Their universities also benefit. As CIAT's Coordinator of the Biotechnology Laboratory comments, the universities find that *"young scientific talent is being formed and is willing to interact with other research groups"*. Linkage through students also creates opportunities for consultations on specific technological areas between the Center and the universities without necessarily involving extra personnel.

Currently CIAT works with students from different Universities, from several cities in the country, in the Areas of Research, Support and Administration following the same guidelines established since seventies. Today the recruitment of students is oriented toward the development of interinstitutional cooperation with Universities and to the training of young scientists. These two approaches facilitate the incorporation of new ideas and creative ways to carry out the institutional processes.

Another result is the strengthening of the Documentation Center by the copies of all theses. CIAT has benefit with students' innovation in all areas, not only related with work by being members of CIAT, students actively enhance its institutional, sporting, cultural, and recreational life. As observed by the Head of the Food and Housing Unit, "*It's mutual learning; the students bring a breath of fresh air to the work place*".

Another advantage of sponsoring students is the cooperation with the community and the establishment of relations with probable partners in the future.

In 2001, CIAT's Management Team approved a policy for accepting undergraduate students into its research projects.

4. Where do we go from here?

We must continue expanding the number of disciplines in which thesis work and work experience can be carried out at CIAT. We also need to improve the system of data management and statistics related to partnership with students.

We will study the possibility of including in the Knowledge Management Database the final versions of the theses. We expect to establish connections between this experience and the Mentoring Project of CGIAR's G&D Program to explore the possibility of taking this model to other countries where CIAT

has projects, and to implement the Fund for Young Researchers (created in 2004), which will support research by students and young professionals at CIAT.

The Head of the Systems Information Unit suggest, to work with universities to explore options of entering thesis work and work experience in, both national and international competitions, to enhance recognition for the authors and for CIAT.

Finally, the Administrative Manager proposes the "*constitution of a network of former students*", to share experiences and job opportunities.

1. What Motivated the New Practice?

The fact that we identified the Nationally Recruited Staff's (NRS) needs as well as their families', such as:

- Lack of their own home.
- Houses in bad shape that had to be improved.
- Difficulties to offer education to their children.
- Difficulties to attend situations of calamity or catastrophe in a family level.
- Lack of economic resources to carry out sports or cultural and recreational activities.
- Communication problems inside the family.
- Difficulties to orientate teenage children.

This group of needs has encouraged the SWF to design and carry out programs that improve the quality of life of CIAT's employees.

2. What was Done? Why did we do it that way?

- A fund was created in which CIAT gives a monthly contribution of 5% over the value of the payroll.
- We established that in order to be entitled to the benefits of the SWF's services, the employees must save an amount that's equal to the one contributed by CIAT, in their own Employee's Fund.
- We subscribed an agreement with the Employee's Fund in order to attend the employees' needs in a coordinated way.
- An administrative board was appointed, which is responsible to determine the policies and define the services given by the SWF. This board is formed by 4 CIAT representatives and 3 employees.
- The administration of the SWF's resources was delegated to the Employee's Fund.
- A permanent control is maintained with internal (CIAT) and external auditing.
- We defined that the SWF's resources are not the employees' property nor they are part of the salary. These resources are only for the employees' service.
- It has been agreed that when leaving CIAT, the employees who have been beneficiaries of SWF, will receive all the contributions that CIAT has made on their behalf during the period they were beneficiaries of the Fund.
- The SWF's financial profits will be used to maintain the acquisitive value of the money (due to inflationary effects) and to financial, education,

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solidarity, quality of life improvement recreation, sports and cultural services.

This option was chosen because with the mutual help, center-employee, and by saving money, the multiple needs of the employees can be fulfilled.

This is the way the fund has operated but because of its growth and adequate financial and social management, every time the services are being expanded to attend new necessities.

3. What have we Achieved and Learned?

- That 95% of our employees have their own house.
- All the credit requests for house repair or enlargement, have been attended.
- To attend all employees who already have their own house but request credit to buy another one.
- All requests for investment projects that are evaluated as feasible have been attended.
- To attend all requests for vehicle purchase.
- To give a long-term loan for their children's superior education, in which the child can pay the credit when studies are finished.
- To attend all credit requests for computer purchase.
- To give social and financial support when catastrophes occur.
- To attend the employees' health calamities as well as their families'.
- To have a group of people dedicated to take care of all services including credit, education and social and psychological support, for the employees as well as for their families.
- To have a group of 120 young people, formed by the employees' children, participating in the quality of life improvement program which includes:

  - Orientation related with the correct management of personal and family finances.
  - Orientation related with the increasing of the family's incomes.

- To attend all the Internationally Recruited Staff's (IRS) credit needs.

We learned that the vision of having employees happy with their work as much as with their family's development is possible if everyone takes part of it.

Also, that helping the employee to fulfill his/her family needs contributes to CIAT's productivity and increases their sense of property with the Institution.

The fact of getting directly to the employee's family, allows the optimization of the resources that CIAT destines to welfare programs and also generates a social image of the Center.

Finally we learned that perseverance, organization, savings, mutual help, conjoint work and a solidary attitude, contribute to the formation of an

excellent model to help effectively the needs of all employees in an organization.

4. Where do we go from here?

We will continue with the current programs as long as they satisfy the real needs.

We aim for the strengthening of the programs, which improve the working experience of employees and their families and increase their quality of life regarding economic aspects, individual welfare and social contribution.

Therefore, we will continue stimulating the academic development of the employees' children and the consolidation of options that generate stable incomes for the family.

CIAT*: Occupational Health and Security Management

1. What Motivated the New Practice?

- We found out that CIAT's employees are exposed to work conditions, which create risks with potential health effects. For this reason it's necessary the advance of plans and programs that allow to have a record of the employees' health evolution in time (the main risks are: handling of chemicals, plague exterminators, sun light exposure, handling of machinery and vehicles, institutional sports practice).

- We consider that the preservation of health and the employees' health integrity, are the best way to contribute towards the high levels of productivity and competition in the institution.

- In a worldwide level, all companies that show Quality Management (ISO 9001), Environmental Management (ISO 14001) and Health and Security Management (OSAS 18001), generate an additional value, which allows them to access more markets in the globalized world.

- There is a legal background in Colombia, which establishes that companies must fulfill certain requirements regarding the Security and Health for their employees.

2. What was done? Why did we do it that way?

Since CIAT was created the directives have paid special attention to the well being of all the employees and to the correct use of the law. Throughout the years we've evolved with the science and technology associated with health and security in the workplace which was confined in an Occupational Health Policy, approved by the Management Team in 2002.

During the year 2003, our region focused on the development of the following activities, under a model of Health and Security Management:

- Characterization of the groups of employees exposed to the different risk factors.

- Implementation of a Health and Security Management model which comes close to the fulfillment of the requirements given by the Colombian Norm 18001, also we focused in a continuous improvement.

- Putting the Health and Security programs under the Epidemiological Vigilance Systems' scheme, considering the following faces: preparation,

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environmental monitoring, personal monitoring, education and evaluation of statistics.

- 100% of Standardization and documentation of the following projects: assistance health, preventive health, health in the work place, security and health and industrial sanitation.
- Implementation of the AIDS and HIV policy.
- Recognition of occupational risk factors and elaboration of a risk factor preview in 90% of the Units and Projects, which take place in CIAT's headquarters.

- Elaboration of the Institution's emergency plan. Training the groups, which form the emergency brigades.

- Implementation of a management program for the Institution's solid and chemical residues, which is in process of diffusion.

- Design and implementation of a program for the evaluation and prevention of injuries related with muscles and bones derived from sports practice.

- And finally, the implementation of a periodic evaluation system for the reorientation of the resources when necessary.

3. What have we Achieved and Learned?

We've achieved:

- We count with the support of the Management Team.

- To establish with precision the groups of employees exposed to the different risk factors generated by CIAT's processes.

- To detect workers who, due to exposure to risk factors, suffer illnesses associated or caused by these factors and who have been sent to the Social Security entities to receive medical benefits and economic compensations that the law determines.

- To detect and improve the existing conditions in work places, minimizing the risks already there.

- In a cultural level, we have accomplished for the workers to have a better attitude towards the health care and safe behavior at work.

- To improve the processes regarding the final disposal of solid and chemical residues at CIAT.

We've learned that:

- No matter how well the job is done, it can be improved every day.

- Due to the fact that technology and legislation are modified every day, it's necessary to get involved in the updating and training processes.

- The information given by the employees is the most important resource in order to improve the security and health conditions in the work place.

- It's very profitable to work with clear priorities to allow the optimization regarding the use of the resources.

- By developing health and security at work plans and programs, we are encouraging in the employees an attitude towards the self-care. This attitude extends to their personal life, family and social environment.

- It's possible to carry out a working schedule well structured involving issues such as preventive medicine, medicine at work, sanitation and industrial security.

- Finally, we learned that, because we are prepared institutionally to attend individual and collective emergency situations, there is more effectiveness and better results.

4. Where do we go from here?

Our goals towards the future are:

- To involve the Internationally Recruited Staff (IRS) in the Occupational Health activities.

- To consolidate CIAT's health and security management program within a model of constant improvement.

- To optimize the reinvestment in consultancy services, provided by the work risks insurance company, towards the main needs to improve the program's results.

- Operate in concordance with the standardized procedures to establish an auditing model which allows us every year to accomplish the standards of the norm OSAS 18001.

- To develop the Epidemiological Vigilance Systems of absence at work, accidents at work and of prevention and control of ergonomic risks.

- To maintain and improve the Epidemiological Vigilance System programs on management of plague exterminators, chemical risks and hearing and vision preservation.

1. What Motivated the New Practice?

To enroll the best workers available in the country, who have the best knowledge, abilities, skills and attitude in order to carry out tasks and accomplish the results related to the position and the ones CIAT expects from an employee of the Center. This position can be temporal or permanent.

In order to develop this process, there is an integral support tool, such as elempleo.com (a Colombian on-line web page), which allows the optimization of the selection processes.

2. What was done? Why did we do it that way?

This tool improves the use of Internet, by reducing in 80% the times and costs in this processes, and also helps to find the best profiles suitable for the position.

The tool is being used in the recruitment process since the job offer is published in billboards, CIAT's Outlook, and elempleo.com's web site.

Also the candidate has the option of getting to know CIAT virtually in order to decide whether to apply or not to the contest.

It is done this way due to the benefits this tool brings to our Institution:

Human Resources: Easy accessibility to all the curriculums using electronic filters which allow the user to select the ones that best adjust to the requested profile, paper less, better custom service for chiefs, evaluators and candidates, fast and on-line information about the evaluations made.

Chiefs: Easy consultation of contest data and curriculums at the same stage of the process; writing of interview information, comments and decisions in a virtual folder, available to all contest evaluators.

CIAT: Use of a database with 95.000 possibilities to find the best professionals of the country, veracity in data provided from the curriculums, effective on-line publicity administration, link to our web page, reduction in paper use, on - line updating of the curriculum vitae and legal and salary issues, application of psychotechnological tests to reduce time and optimize the process with more analytic and strategic content and there is no need to move from one place to another because the employer him self can make the offer which remains in the site for future automatic updates.

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The candidates: They can apply to a vacant in each or all the companies from the companies' database, opportune answer on receiving the curriculum, e-mail job offers which apply to their profile, statistic's queries about their curriculum and, also, as an additional value and with no cost, they have access to: an electronic bulletin with job offers, which adjust to their working experience, salary calculator and professional counseling.

3. What have we Achieved and Learned?

To manage a candidate's database in which we actually have 16832 curriculums.

We also have achieved agility, reliability, paper less, updating on legal and working issues, application of psychotechnological tests which optimize the processes and space with a higher analytic and strategic content, reduction of operative time, on-line business opportunity and statistics such as:

- 188.064 people consulted the CIAT job offers; 21.517 of those people consulted again and 2.087 applied.

- 768 curriculums analyzed, 187 pre-selected, 76 finalists, 18 hired.

There is the possibility to select curriculums thorough candidate's search, using filters to obtain the desired profile.

We learned that the recruitment process can be more efficient when tools are used, because as the information via Internet is shared, the selection committee's integrants can be a part of this process from any part of the world.

We can apply psychotechnological tests with good reliability and validity levels, which show results of great magnitude and without the need to invest in the psychometric analysis.

We can use on-line salary survey services, with permanent data update for Nationally Recruited Staff (NRS) positions.

The curriculum database can be handled virtually with easy accessibility, paper less, easy sharing and without the need for physical storage spaces.

4. Where do we go from here?

We wish to continue with the use of this tool because it completely integrates and covers the recruitment process.

We hope to extend this service to the Internationally Recruited Staff (IRS) recruitment process. This is why we hope for the provider to offer us an English version.

Good Practice Showcase

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People Power The Vision